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TAGS: [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [MU](#)
SUBJECT: OMAN CONFIRMS PARTICIPATION IN MEFTA TRADE AND
INVESTMENT CONFERENCE

REF: MUSCAT 207

Classified By: DCM Alfred Fonteneau, reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (U) On March 10, the Ambassador met with Salem al-Ismaily, the Executive President of the Omani Center for Investment Promotion and Export Development (OCIPED), to urge Oman's participation in the proposed March 29 Middle East Free Trade Agreement (MEFTA) Trade and Investment Conference. Ismaily confirmed that the Sultanate will participate in the conference and asked to be put in touch with the appropriate representative handling the receipt of funding commitments. He noted that he would accompany delegation head Hussain bin Ali bin Abd al-Latif, the Sultanate's Ambassador to the UK, to the conference. Salem bin Qasim al-Zawawi, Economic Adviser to the Minister of Commerce and Industry (and nephew to one of the closest advisors to the Sultan), also will attend as a delegate.

¶2. (C) Ismaily informed the Ambassador that Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, Minister of Commerce and Industry, would be unable to participate in the event. As reported reftel, Ismaily explained that the Minister, frustrated with the slow pace of the implementation process, would not be participating in public events regarding the FTA until the Agreement was implemented.

¶3. (C/NF) Comment: The Embassy is pleased that Ismaily will participate in the conference. He is one of the government's most articulate speakers, and is well-versed in addressing American audiences. By way of background, Ismaily is a recipient of several degrees in telecommunications, industrial engineering, and business administration from universities in the UK and U.S. He started his government career in 1984 as the Managing Director for Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (PEIE). In 1996, he was appointed as the Executive President of OCIPED, which was established by royal decree to attract trade and investment to Oman. Ismaily concurrently serves as a director on several prominent boards, including BankMuscat, BP Oman, and Gulf Aluminous Rolling Mill (Bahrain). He frequently speaks at international economic conferences and participated in a prior World Economic Forum event as a moderator.

GRAPPO